

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A lawn tractor comprising:
 - a frame;
 - an engine supported by said frame;
 - a mower deck supported by said frame, said mower deck comprising at least first and second cutting blades;
 - first and second blade pulleys operatively connected to said first and second cutting blades, respectively, wherein rotation of said first and second blade pulleys causes corresponding rotation of said first and second cutting blades, respectively;
 - a drive system comprising a drive pulley rotatably connected to said engine and a belt operatively connecting said drive pulley to said first and second blade pulleys; and,
 - a vibration damping mechanism comprising a first idler pulley operatively connected to a slack portion of said belt and a second idler pulley operatively connected to a tension portion of said belt.
2. (Currently amended) A lawn tractor according to claim 1 wherein said vibration damping mechanism further comprises first and second biasing means operatively connected to said first and second idler pulleys, respectively.
3. (Original) A lawn tractor according to claim 2 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 15\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.
4. (Original) A lawn tractor according to claim 3 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 10\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.

5. (Original) A lawn tractor according to claim 4 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 5\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.

6. (Original) A lawn tractor according to claim 5 wherein the first and second biasing means are substantially identical springs.

7. (Currently amended) A lawn tractor according to claim 2 wherein said vibration damping mechanism further comprises~~[[:]]~~ first and second pulley arms operatively connected to said first and second ~~blade~~ idler pulleys, respectively, wherein said first and second pulley arms further comprise an opening for receiving an associated tool.

8. (Original) A lawn tractor according to claim 2 wherein: the position of said first idler pulley is elevated relative to the position of said second idler pulley.

9. (Original) An apparatus comprising:

a mower deck comprising at least a first cutting blade positioned within said deck and at least a first blade pulley operatively connected to said first cutting blade, wherein rotation of said first blade pulley causes corresponding rotation of said first cutting blade;

a drive system comprising a drive pulley and a belt operatively connecting said drive pulley to said blade pulley; and,

a vibration damping mechanism comprising a first idler pulley operatively connected to a slack portion of said belt and a second idler pulley operatively connected to a tension portion of said belt.

10. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 9 wherein said vibration damping mechanism further comprises: first and second biasing means operatively connected to said first and second idler pulleys, respectively.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 10 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 15\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.

12. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 11 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 10\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.

13. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 12 wherein the biasing tension force of the first biasing means is within $\pm 5\%$ of the biasing tension force for the second biasing means.

14. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 13 wherein the first and second biasing means are substantially identical springs.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (New) A lawn tractor according to claim 1 wherein said slack portion of said belt is between the drive pulley and the first blade pulley, and wherein said tension portion of said belt is between the second blade pulley and the drive pulley.

18. (New) A vibration damping mechanism for use with a lawn tractor adapted to reduce vibrations caused by operation of vegetation cutting blades of the tractor, the lawn tractor having a frame, an engine and a mower deck supported by said frame, said mower deck having at least first and second cutting blades mounted beneath the deck and first and second blade pulleys operatively connected to said first and second cutting blades, respectively, and a drive system comprising a drive pulley connected to a crankshaft of said engine and a drive belt operatively connecting said first and second blade pulleys to said drive pulley for transferring rotational energy from the drive pulley to said first and second blade pulleys, thereby causing rotation of said first and second cutting blades for cutting vegetation, the vibration damping mechanism comprising:

a first idler pulley for placing tension in said belt having a first spring biasing said first idler pulley into engagement with said belt, wherein said first idler pulley is

positioned so as to contact said belt in a slack portion of said belt between the drive pulley and the first blade pulley; and

a second idler pulley for reducing vibrations of said belt having a second spring biasing said second idler pulley in engagement with said belt, wherein said second idler pulley is positioned so as to contact said belt in a tension portion of the belt between the second blade pulley and the drive pulley.

19. (New) The vibration damping mechanism of claim 18 further comprising first and second pulley arms operatively connected to said first and second idler pulleys, respectively, wherein said first and second idler pulley arm are pivotably attached to said deck, and further comprising stopping means positioned with respect to said pulley arms so as to limit the amount of pivoting of said first and second pulley arms.

20. (New) The vibration damping mechanism of claim 18 wherein the first and second springs are substantially identical springs.

21 (New) A lawn tractor comprising the vibration damping mechanism of claim 18.